LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

PRESENT DAY CURRENTS IN NOVEL WRITING

Effort to Meet Demand for Treatment of the Vital Questions.

STARTED IN ENGLAND

Return to the Methods of the Great Writers of the Last Century.

By COSMO HAMILTON.

Is it self-consciousness or moral cowardice that stops us all from putting into the back of our novels just that sting that will cause our readers to sit up straight and consider? Or have we listened too long to those croakers among publishers and the theatre who believe with quite persistent and apathetic conviction that the reading and playgoing public is brainless and bovine?

It is not easy to put one's finger on the precise reason for our disinclination to do in our books what Dickens and Thackeray and Besant and the other nineteenth century giants did in theirs—I mean take some horrid evil in the scheme of things as they are and expose it or hold up a set of modern scoundrels and politicians by the scruff of the neck for all to see and detest.

It seems to me that nothing really big can be attempted in novels until the minds of writers are disabused of the fixed idea that the reading public can digest only blood and thunder and sickly sentimentality. There is a large and growing public both in America and England, especially in America, that is turning with nausea from the vulgar and sentimental tuppence colored common stuff that has been served out to it for so long a time.

Education, like a slow tide, is making headway. Men and women are beginning to find themselves surrounded with vital and pressing questions which demand solution. There is, for instance, no nation of importance that has not got the microbe of socialism stirring in its veins. All great countries are faced with the unrest of labor. The spirit of revolt is spreading as quickly and as insidiously as a sea fog. In the richest and most civilized countries—it is the irony of fate—the slimy, cunning hand of degeneracy is clutching at its youth.

In the history of the world the footsteps of wealth have been dogged by the grinning figure of Decay. Capital and incapacity follow each other almost as a matter of course. The pendulum swings just as regularly to-day as ever it did, and no science, however amazing, no art, however perfect, no disbelief, however proud and self-sufficient and courageous—because just as it takes great courage to commit suicide, it takes great courage to be an infidel—can arrest it in its inevitable movement backward and forward and backward again. "Forever—never; never—forever."

In fact, so irritable and disgusted have thinking men and women become with the almost universal tendency of novelists and playwrights to dodge all serious things that they are not reading novels or attending the theatre. The day is very nearly over for the man who writes down instead of up, who debauches his art and his workmanship for the sake of the dollar instead of aiming at the highest mark and being well satisfied with achievement and cents. Already there is a slight movement, a stirring, a restlessness among a small school of writers.

It has begun, oddly enough, in England, where so few things begin now. There are Galsworthy and Masefield and Wells. There is also Kipling. As to Kipling he has more power to his unflinching pen—flung himself often at the windmills that disgrace the placid English landscape. He has lashed at cant and hypocrisy, political robbery and humbug, and he has dared, in the face of the sneers of the English "literary gent," to fly the Union Jack mast high. Until quite recently, however, it has been the fashion to talk scoffingly of Kipling in such stucco homes of nonachievement as the Savile Club and the Garrick. Now mere mention of his name brings into the artificial atmosphere of these places a great rush of east wind, far too strong and clean and healthy for the constitutions of the dilettante and the critic.

Now Galsworthy has come and has shot his bolt at the English prison system and Masefield has arisen with his intolerance of anæmia. There are one or two others also who are throwing off the smug coat of convention and turning up their sleeves. These men believe, as Dickens and Thackeray believed, that the work and vocation of a novelist do not consist merely in tickling the palates of the unthinking with sweet stuff but in giving them something with a basic idea, in employing their art to conceal from the person who dreads the truth, in a strong, undiluted dose, some lesson, either moral for political or psychological. It is right, and it is true.

One sees how right and how timely the movement is, this return to the methods of the great dead, by giving even the most cursory examination to the state of the book market and the theatre. People are beginning to read live and real books and leave the shoddy, machine made, banal and often pornographic stuff alone. They have already left the theatre for the picture palace for the sole reason that in the latter they can see the actual as well as the artificial.

I put forward no plea for stark realism, for Balzacian details of the sordid and unpleasant. I stand by romance, as I hold by good wine; idealism as I hope for Heaven; and optimism as I believe in forgiveness, but I say that it is still the duty of the novelist and the playwright to hold the mirror up to nature, even if his art demands that he shall choose that part of nature that is not all debased and unlovely.

French Literature and Scotch Universities.

From the London Globe.

René Bazin, the distinguished French writer and academician, has just had an unprecedented compliment paid him by the University of Glasgow. The university's French literature syllabus includes the study of four French books, one each of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and two of the nineteenth century.

The university, together with the other three Scottish alma matres, has just selected M. Bazin's "Terre Qui Meurt" as one of the books, the first time that the work of a living French writer has been chosen.

WEDDING CAKE AND "M. L. G."

Mysterious Author Sends Publishers Evidence of Book's Success.

The anonymous author of "To M. L. G.," whose identity has been arousing guesses of every variety in theatrical and literary circles ever since the book appeared last winter, is at last securely married to "M. L. G.," for whom the book was written as an indirect message, for she has just sent boxes of wedding cake to her American publishers and to Coningsby Dawson, the book reviewer of *Everybody's Magazine*, through whose criticism of the book she was discovered at last and understood by the also mysterious "M. L. G."

It seems that the two found each other some time last summer, but they were married only this month, and the publishers and the reviewer feel so proud of the parts they played in the romance that they have had their boxes of cake photographed to hold as proof of how truth is more romantic than fiction.

While the boarding house in which the actress-author lived in New York has been identified as one kept some time ago by the mother of Bijou Fernandez, and while many efforts have been made to identify the author herself the publishers still insist that they can do no more than guess as to her identity. The author has given hints as to this in a letter she wrote soon after her lover had at last got hold of the book to her English solicitor, who in turn sent it to the Stokes people.

"I hardly know what to say," she wrote, "in answer to your telegram. I have told you already what immense gratitude I feel toward the *Daily Mail*. I have no idea of the critic's name; he is only 'L. N.' to me. But he has made all the difference in my life between gray sadness and joy. And my gratitude is to the paper also, and it is because it goes far and wide that it brought happiness to me. But I must not give pain to the one person of greatest importance in the world to me. I must think of his people too, for it was through the American lady I spoke of in my book, who is married to a cousin of his, that we first met each other years ago. If you should tell a newspaper much about him or about me I could be easily identified by his relatives, and that would not be fair to them or him. I will put down all the things which I think could do no harm to print.

"The letters 'M. L. G.' are not the real initials of the name, but a kind of nickname I gave the person I wished to reach with my book. That was long ago, when we first became friends; but I was sure if he saw those three letters on the cover of a book he would think of me and perhaps he would read it. I wanted the letters to be in my handwriting, but this was only done in America. I wanted also to have on the cover of the book a picture of my bangle with a star in a ring hanging from it, because he could not fail to recognize the sign. The photograph of the bracelet which the publishers had was not used, however, probably for some good reason, though I was never told why.

"I kept hoping I might hear from the person for whom I wrote the book, because my American friend, married to his cousin, was the one who wished me to write it. He could have sent me a letter through her. It was in her garden I met him the first time. She could have sent him the book, but I did not want her to do that because it would be almost the same as my sending it to himself myself. A long time passed and I heard nothing.

"The person I wanted to have read my book was in the East. He never saw it at the time I was hoping to hear. He was taken very ill and as he had suffered from a heat stroke his head was affected and for many weeks he could not read at all. When he grew better he asked to have newspapers given him and in that way read a great number of old copies of the *Daily Mail*. Also he had some magazines from London and New York and the first knowledge he had of my book and its message was in coming across a notice of it in a *Mail* months old. Almost at the same time he saw another in *Everybody's Magazine*. Even before he read the book, because he could not bear the delay of waiting to get it after seeing what was said, he sent me a telegram in care of his cousin, asking if this was really a message for him from me. But I would not accept his generosity until he had read the book and knew the whole thing. Now he has forgiven me and I mean to devote my future to saving him from regret."

AUTHORS AND THEIR WORK.

Fitz Roy Carrington, whose "Prints and Their Makers," a book of essays on engravers and etchers, has just been issued by the Century Company, has been called to fill the new place of curator of prints at Harvard University and he will occupy the same position in the Boston Public Library. Mr. Carrington has been for a number of years a partner in the firm of Frederick Keppel & Co., but will retire on the 1st of March.

Miss Caroline Lockhart, author of "The Lady Doc" and other Western stories, spends much of her time on her ranch at Cody, Wyo., and judging from a recent letter it is no wonder that her stories ring true. "I am trying to do a little work on a short story," she writes, "but it is wellnigh impossible, as there are so many more fascinating things on hand like trout fishing, hunting grouse, killing rattlesnakes and panning dirt—this a placer diggings." The letter is postmarked Dixie, Idaho, where Miss Lockhart has been spending the summer.

An interesting bit of news relating to Jessie Kaufman, author of "A Jewel of the Seas," just published by the Lippincotts, is that she lives the greater part of the time in Honolulu and in the place where Stevenson wrote his "Master of Ballantrae." The place is called San Souci and is now owned by a Mr. Hitch.

Hamlin Garland writes from West Salem, Wis., that he is now superintending and rebuilding on the old foundation of his house, which was burned a few weeks ago. He hopes to have it finished by Thanksgiving before he comes East. The accounts of the fire, he says, are substantially correct, though the window by which he escaped was not a second story one. Mrs. Garland saved a maid from being burned to death by rolling her in one of their Navajo rugs. Although most of their furniture, books and pictures were lost, Mr. Garland succeeded in saving all his manuscripts.

Elmer Russell Gregor, author of "Camping in the Winter Woods," had, after his education in school, the education of the wilderness. He has prospected for gold and silver in the mining regions of the West, has made solitary camps in the wilderness and has lived the life of a hunter and explorer in many regions.

Fanny L. McKinney, author of "Nora Square Accounts," a story of real girls and boys, is a graduate of Vassar College and later took special courses at Columbia University and Teachers College. Although deeply interested in kindergarten work, she has never taught. Miss McKinney comes from old New England stock, her father being a Yale '61 graduate and a breveted Major of the civil war.

Major-Gen. James Harrison Wilson, who has had a long and eventful career, is now in Europe after finishing his autobiography, which will be published by the Appletons under the title of "Under the Old Flag." The volume of memoirs will contain, incidentally, a frank discussion of the oft disputed question, "Did Col. Roosevelt ever go up San Juan Hill?"

Hubert Howe Bancroft, who, as the head of the Bancroft Company, has for many years been identified with the literary and business life of San Francisco, has arrived in New York for a short stay. He is generally recognized as the greatest living American historian, and his great collection of American historical data, known as the Bancroft library, is now in the possession of the University of California. No other such collection has ever been made by an individual, nor at such cost of time, labor and money.

Paul West, whose "Just Boy," is announced by the Dorans, is a dramatist as well as story writer, having collaborated in the writing of "Pearl and Pumpkin," "Sergeant Brue," and other musical comedies. He has written several vaudeville sketches, much poetry and delightful stories for children. The new book gives a humorous glimpse of the world as seen through a schoolboy's eyes.

Peter Newell says that "The Hole Book" was suggested by the inspection of an ancient volume, published in 1642, through the greater portion of which a bookworm had gnawed its way, leaving a hole behind. "The Slant Book," he says, was suggested by idly clipping diagonally the wrapper of a weekly paper while his mind was in a receptive condition for a new idea. He has not yet told what gave the idea for his latest book, "The Rocket Book."

E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, whose latest work of collaboration, "Dan Russell the Fox," has just been announced by the Dorans, are cousins living in Skibbereen, County Cork, Ireland. Miss Somerville is the daughter of Lieut.-Col. Somerville, D. L. of Drishane. She studied in Paris at the Colorossi and Delecluse studios, and has exhibited in London and Dublin in "oils" and done much illustrating in black and white and colors. With Martin Ross, who is Miss Violet Martin, she has written many books and magazine articles. She is a member of several art clubs and hunting clubs, and was for five years master of the West Carbery foxhounds.

THE MAKING OF BOOKS.

Harper & Brothers announce that they are publishing "The Ways of the Planets," by Martha E. Martin; "Stories by Lincoln," by Anthony Gross; "The Buccaneers," by Don Seitz, and "The Green C," by Josephine A. Meyer. The same firm is putting to press for reprinting "The Voice," by Margaret Deland; "Strange Stories from History," by George Cary Eggleston, and "The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book," by Albert Bigelow Paine.

Houghton Mifflin Company announces the following publications for early November: "The Autobiography of an Individualist," by James O. Fagan; "The Japanese Twins," by Lucy Fitch Perkins; "Intimations of Immortality in the Sonnets of Shakespeare," by George H. Palmer; "The Milk Question," by Milton J. Rosenau, M. D.; "Oriel and Other Poems," by Percy Mackaye; "The Unconquered Air and Other Poems," by Florence Earle Coates, and a limited Riverside Press edition of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Success."

Doubleday, Page & Co. have a long list of books, mostly non-fiction and many of them important works, for November. Among those scheduled for early appearance are: "Charcoals of New and Old New York," by F. Hopkinson Smith, and also a limited edition de luxe of 125 copies on large paper with special features and signed by the author; "Collected Verse," by Rudyard Kipling; "The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore," by Ernest Thompson Seton; "The Boy's Book of New Inventions," by Harry E. Maule; "The Book of Grasses," an addition to the "Nature Library," by Mary Evans Francis, and "Fifty Salem Doorways," by Frank Cousins.

The announcement of a forthcoming new book by Henry Sydnor Harrison has not diminished the popularity of his first book, "Queed," which has just gone into its seventeenth edition. The publisher, Houghton Mifflin Co., also announces new editions of Mary Hallock Foote's pioneer romance, "A Picked Company," and of Margaret Prescott Montague's "Linda."

B. W. Huebsch announces an interesting book in Stephen Jenkins's romance of New York and The Bronx, "A Princess and Another," set in Colonial and Revolutionary days. Mr. Jenkins is well known for his works on Broadway and The Bronx, and is considered an authoritative historian of New York.

John Kendrick Bangs's book of Christmas stories, "A Little Book of Christmas," is announced by Little, Brown & Co., to have gone into a third printing. The volume has been recommended by the American Library Association for purchase by small libraries.

The Macmillans report that Miss Alica Brown's "The Secret of the Clan" went into a second large edition the first week of its publication.

GIRLS DOTE ON "BILLY FORTUNE"

At Least One Who Can "Cook Real Good" Sends Hint.

"Billy Fortune," the light hearted and irresponsible hero of William R. Lighton's stories, just published in book form by the Appletons, has a way with the women which seems threatening to make things embarrassing for his creator. Recently, just after the publication of one of the adventures in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a girl in Missouri addressed a letter to Billy at Raw Hide Buttes, Wyo. She declared that she would like to entrust her heart and welfare to the keeping of a man who "felt like him about women." She could "cook real good," she said, she was "honorable and above reproach," and had never been in love before, "except for a few small times."

She wrote quite frankly to Billy. "Money don't count," she declared, "and so I haven't got any, only enough to buy my own clothes for the wedding, but I could be happy without money if a man thought right about women, so please let me hear from you."